

# United States Senate

March 26, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

CC: Jeffrey Zients  
Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to be the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The nation faces unprecedented challenges as you begin your new role. I write today to request your assistance in securing additional vaccines for New Jersey to ensure the virus's resurgence does not outpace our vaccination efforts and to address the continued disparity in vaccination rates in our most at-risk communities.

The COVID-19 virus continues to threaten the health and economic well-being of our nation and while the virus has not spared any part of our country, New Jersey has been battling this virus for far longer than almost every other state. Currently, New Jersey has the most new COVID-19 cases per capita and is susceptible to new variants that could become the predominant strains in the United States very soon.

I applaud the efforts of New Jersey's Governor, Phil Murphy, as our state has worked hard to ramp up and inoculate as many citizens as possible. I also appreciate the recent announcement of a new community vaccination site in Newark that will help vaccinate 6,000 New Jerseyans. I hope we will be able to work together to bring additional clinics to areas of the state that also have lower vaccination rates.

Like other states, we are hamstrung by the availability of doses. New Jersey has the capacity and infrastructure to launch an even more aggressive vaccination campaign. However, like every other state, our state is also struggling to reach lower-income and minority communities. In New Jersey, we are experiencing lagging vaccination rates in some of our most diverse counties like Hudson and Essex.

New Jersey is quickly and efficiently distributing every dose that it receives but it is not enough. To get ahead of the growing threat of variants as well as our increasing case numbers, the State will need more doses of the COVID-19 vaccines and time is of the essence. I request that the Administration consider targeting communities with high risk of variant spread like New Jersey for targeted allocations. Ultimately, such an aggressive strategy will help stem the spread of these emerging variants nationwide.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I stand ready to work with you and President Biden on defeating this virus. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff for further information and I look forward to hearing from you on this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Menendez".

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "C. Booker".

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator